

CRAIG SCENTS PLOT IN CHARTER MAKING

Commission Is Packed by
Miller Men, He Says at
Organization.

F. M. SCOTT CHAIRMAN

Comptroller Rebuked for
Condemning Plan Before
It Starts.

GOVERNOR HEARS DEBATE

Gives Members Free Hand and
Promises Legislative Ac-
tion When They Finish.

Comptroller Charles L. Craig made an unsuccessful attempt yesterday to block the organization of the new Charter Revision Commission, of which he is an ex-officio member.

He intimated the commission had been packed, suggested it might be controlled by the Governor in violation of the principle of home rule, and that it might be necessary to present a minority report to protect the city's interests.

These remarks were made in the presence of Gov. Miller, who on calling the members together in his apartment in the Hotel Plaza, had told them they had a free hand.

Continuing his attack on the methods of procedure suggested, the Comptroller finally drew from Francis M. Scott, former Supreme Court Justice, who had been elected chairman over Mr. Craig's protest, this report:

"Now don't start again. I don't care to make speeches, but do not start in at every meeting and accuse every member of being a crook."

Falling to get an adjournment, Comptroller Craig had nominated Mayor Hylan as chairman in opposition to Mr. Scott, who it was well understood, was the choice of the Governor for the place. The Comptroller's vote was the only one cast for the Mayor. Neither Mr. Scott nor the Mayor voted.

Neither Mayor Hylan nor Edward Riegelmann, Borough President of Brooklyn, qualified by signing the oath of office as members of the commission. They acted on the advice of John P. O'Brien, Corporation Counsel, who suggested that by so doing they might forfeit their city offices. There is a law pro-

hibiting city officials from accepting State office under penalty of forfeiting the former. The law creating the charter commission undertook, however, to relieve its members from the operation of the general act. But the Mayor and the Borough President did not want to take a chance. It was understood that both officials could serve unofficially without being sworn until their fears were allayed.

It developed that the Comptroller already had signed his qualifying oath and returned it to Albany without waiting for the organization meeting.

"I am not at all fearful of losing my office," he said, "and I would not shed an awful lot of tears, if I should lose it."

"It will be a terrible thing if Brooklyn lost Borough President and I a job," observed Mr. Riegelmann.

Prof. Howard Lee McBain of Columbia was elected secretary over the protest of the Comptroller.

An organization committee of three received authority to engage Edward J. McGoldrick, former Justice, as counsel, at the suggestion of Mr. Scott, who spoke in the highest praise of his ability.

At the end of a speech in which he told of charter work along the lines of the interview in THE NEW YORK HERALD yesterday, Mr. Scott said:

"I desire to thank you all—except the Comptroller—for your expression of confidence. The reputation of this commission, about which the Comptroller is so very doubtful, will be made, as that of any man, by what he does, and not by what somebody says about him before he commences to do it."

"Whatever reputation we have in the

community will not depend upon what somebody else says, but upon what the outcome of our work is. It may not be accepted. It certainly won't be perfect, but if the community believe we have made an honest attempt, without ulterior purposes, to produce the best our efforts can produce, I am quite sure we need have no apprehension as to public disapprobation."

Rebukes the Comptroller.

Rebuking the Comptroller for his suspicions that the commission would be controlled in Albany Mr. Scott said:

"I regret that the Comptroller has found it desirable to interject the objection he has made. I regret very much that he puts himself at the outset in a position of antagonism to the other members of the commission, that he has announced in advance, without having the slightest conception of what the commission will produce in the way of a report, that there will be a minority report to which the action of the majority will be opposed."

"It is an unfortunate and unhappy, and I think an ominous, commencement of our labors to have one of our members, and one from whom under ordinary circumstances we should be entitled to receive a great deal of information and assistance, here announce himself at once as in antagonism to the commission and whatever the members may undertake to do."

If necessary they would have to get along without the Comptroller's assistance, Mr. Scott added.

"As for me," he continued, "my blood does not boil as it once did with partisan considerations, and I am quite will-

ing to look at everything from a purely impersonal standpoint and entirely in the light of what is best for the interests of New York."

The Comptroller also was rebuked by Herman A. Metz, former Comptroller, and Alderman John J. Keller of Brooklyn.

All the members of the commission were present except Edward M. Bassett and Frank L. Polk, who were out of the city. In addition to those already named there were George Cromwell, L. L. Delafield, Joseph Levine, William Barclay Parsons, Arthur S. Somers and H. P. Williams.

When a photographer suggested that the Mayor pose next to the Governor and Mr. Scott in a group picture the Mayor replied: "With the Governor's permission I will."

"I have nothing to say to you," remarked the Governor in calling the members to order. "If I had any views with respect to charter revision I should not undertake to press them upon you. You have an opportunity to do an important piece of constructive work. I hope it will not go to naught."

The Governor said he wanted them to take all the time necessary. He realized they could not complete their labors for the regular session of the Legislature this winter. But if they got through later he would be glad to call a special session.

As to the point of swearing in raised

by the Mayor, who had his Corporation Counsel with him, the Governor said:

"I am frank to say it had not occurred to me as being serious, but I had perhaps not given it careful attention. Of course, so long as there is any doubt it would be inadvisable for the Mayor formally to qualify."

Then the Governor added jokingly: "Of course, the Mayor will thoroughly appreciate there was no deep laid plot in this thing."

"Oh, no," laughed the Mayor in equally good humor.

But the Comptroller was immediately aroused and began:

"That plot was laid when the bill was passed and when the resolution for the Mayor investigating committee was adopted."

Announces His Suspicions.

Comptroller Craig accepted the post of temporary chairman, with the understanding he could retire in order to relieve his mind of some thoughts.

Asking Col. Parsons to take the chair, the Comptroller started an attack on the motives back of the charter commission, which he said was a companion to the Meyer legislative investigating committee.

The people had been impressed with the idea that the Meyer committee was concerned not so much with the welfare of the people of the city as with the service of some ulterior end. He continued:

"Now, it would be a very unfortunate impression to go abroad that this charter revision commission, which has origin in the same bit of legislation or its companion bit of legislation, should ever acquire that character by the people of the city of New York. Undoubtedly the questions that will have to be determined by the commission will present the greatest difficulties, possibly the greatest division of opinion thereto in regard to the right of the city of New York to control and operate its own public utilities."

"Now this subject has been the subject of very general discussion almost. I may say, ever since Gov. Miller took office, and he has caused more discussion, I think, than any other man in the State, and I think it is time that we have the entire confidence of the community, which can be obtained for the commission if we have as a chairman some one who has evidenced that he has the confidence of the community on those and other municipal questions."

"I think an unfortunate impression has got abroad to the end that the Governor may intend to unduly influence the action of the commission."

Mr. Craig called attention to the announcement in the newspapers that Mr. Scott would be chairman.

"It seems to me," he added, "that the Governor should be the last one to be a party to the creation of the impression

that the commission has in any manner been packed, so the appointment of the chairman is one for the Governor rather than one for the members."

"If the commission was to be run from Albany it would mean a majority report coinciding with the Governor's views and that of a majority of the Legislature (identified with the passage of the act creating the transit commission) and a minority report. The majority report would be passed by the Legislature, but the Mayor would kill it, or the Legislature and the Governor are going to be in the position of forcing on the people of the city a charter that is not in accordance with their desires."

When Mr. Scott had been elected chairman in spite of the Comptroller's efforts the latter, having resumed the chair, said solemnly:

"Judge Scott, I suppose I am permitted to notify you of the fact that you have been elected permanent chairman of this commission."

Hylan Gives His Demands.

After Mr. Scott's speech, in which he promised that no "personal, partisan or party considerations" would sway the commission in its work, Mayor Hylan said he did not think a new charter would amount to much unless the city received the right that eludes of the second and third class have of making their own consolidations of departments, as

and when they desire. The Mayor offered every assistance. The Comptroller said he would furnish such employees as he might legally; that the records of the Department of Finance would be available at all times.

Mr. Craig flared up again on the motion for the appointment of an organization committee of three to make arrangements, with Mr. Goldrick to act as counsel, to select an executive secretary and such other assistance as might be needed. The Comptroller wanted no sub-committees, that savored too much of the Meyer committee. Besides at the proper time he wanted to say something on the subject of executive secretary. When the Comptroller suggested that the full commission vote on Mr. McGoldrick's retention, of which he was in favor, Mr. Scott's patience broke, and he resented having the Comptroller accuse every one of being "a crook."

"What we have said is that we want McGoldrick," said the chairman. "I tell you I have talked to him and he has agreed to take the place. Now you get up and say we are passing it up, which is really accusing me of being a crook."

"I think the commission should dispose of the matter at once," was the Comptroller's only reply.

Adjournment was taken to Tuesday at 2:30 P. M. the place to be selected later.

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